



Queensland
Government

Toward **2**
Tomorrow's Queensland

A photograph of a tall, slender glass filled with beer and a thick head of white foam. The glass is placed on a dark, reflective surface, likely a bar or table. In the background, a person's hands and part of their striped shirt are visible, suggesting a social setting.

Drink driving in Queensland

The next steps

Tomorrow's Queensland:
strong, green, smart, healthy and fair



A message from the Honourable Rachel Nolan, Minister for Transport

Sadly, people continue to be killed or injured on Queensland roads because of drink driving. These crashes devastate families and communities and have a significant impact on health, emergency and support services. This is even more tragic because drink driving is avoidable.

In the eight years prior to 31 December 2009, 635 people were killed as a result of crashes involving drink drivers, representing on average 24.2% per cent of all road fatalities in Queensland for that period. In 2009 alone, 70 people were killed in crashes that involved a driver over their legal alcohol limit.

Many people also suffer serious injury as a result of drink driving crashes. In the eight years prior to 31 March 2009, 5017 people were hospitalised as a result of crashes involving drink drivers, representing 10.4% of all hospitalised casualties for that time.

Despite the risks of crashing, receiving a fine or losing their licence, many Queenslanders are still being caught drinking and driving. More than 32,000 drink driving offences were detected in Queensland in 2009, committed by more than 30,000 drink drivers.

While there has been a reduction in drink driving related fatalities in 2010 so far, we cannot be complacent. The Queensland Government is committed to tackling the drink driving problem.

Some of the successes to date and the planned initiatives are detailed in the following document.

What's happened so far?

The Queensland Government has a strong record on drink driving. Currently, Queensland's anti drink driving effort involves a range of measures that include random breath testing, legal alcohol limits, licensing penalties and fines – some of the toughest in the country, public education and advertising campaigns, offender education programs and designated driver programs.

These initiatives have made a difference with drink driving related fatalities 40.3 per cent lower in the 12 months to 30 September 2010 than in the previous 12 month period, and 46.8 per cent lower than the previous five year average.

Initiatives introduced more recently include:

- High risk drink drivers committing certain offences since August 2010 are required to enter the Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program once their disqualification period ends.
- In July 2010, the zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit was extended to all Learner, Provisional and Probationary drivers, not just those aged under 25 years. The zero blood alcohol concentration also now applies to RE riders in their first 12 months of holding that licence, regardless of age.
- Vehicle impoundment for high level repeat drink drivers was introduced in July 2008.
- Cumulative disqualifications for multiple drink or drug driving related offences commenced in May 2008.
- Immediate licence suspensions for certain drink driving offences was introduced in December 2006.

What are we doing now?

The Queensland Government recently conducted statewide consultation to gauge the views of experts and ordinary Queenslanders on how to tackle drink driving.

The *Drink driving in Queensland discussion paper* was released for online consultation on 14 March 2010, with consultation closing on 17 May 2010, with over 1000 responses received.

In response to the feedback, a suite of potential drink driving initiatives and improvements to existing initiatives has been developed.

Three new initiatives, to be introduced by the Government from mid 2011, strengthen penalties and enhance current breath testing practices making it easier for police to successfully identify and prosecute drink driving offenders. They are:

1. immediately suspending a person's licence at a BAC level of 0.10, a reduction from the current level of 0.15. At a BAC of 0.10, a drink driver is almost five times more likely to crash than a driver at zero BAC. Based on crash risk, immediate licence suspension at a lower threshold will protect the public by not allowing offenders that pose a risk to drive legally until their court date. It will also potentially prevent a repeat offence while the immediate suspension is in effect.
2. increasing the maximum time allowed to obtain a breath/blood specimen for drink driving offences from two to three hours
3. allowing the arresting/detaining officer to also conduct the breath analysis for drink driving offenders.

What are we doing next?

We are continuing to explore other more complex initiatives which were supported through the *Drink driving in Queensland discussion paper*.

This includes assessing the feasibility of the initiatives in more detail and addressing the potential cost implications and operational issues.

Further drink driving initiatives under further consideration include:

- Compulsory blood testing of drivers attending hospital for examination or treatment as a result of motor vehicle crashes.
- Excluding all drink driving offenders who have been convicted of a drink driving offence with a BAC greater than or equal to 0.10 from being eligible for a work licence.
- Developing and providing guidelines and principles to assist community groups to develop designated driver programs.
- Promoting the use of designated driver programs across Queensland for improved anti-drink driving outcomes in our communities.
- Developing an information pack for community groups to assist them investigate and sustain 'alternative transport options' through appropriate collaboration between industry, community groups and government agencies.
- Developing an information pack to assist liquor accords and community groups to promote the anti-drink driving message.
- Improving responsible service of alcohol training curriculum and standards to include appropriate educational content on drink driving.
- Increasing the initial vehicle impoundment period to longer than 48 hours.
- Extending vehicle impoundment and forfeiture to any repeat drink driving offence.

Queenslanders also expressed strong support for the compulsory rehabilitation and education measures for drink drivers canvassed in the discussion paper. The measures included referral to a brief educational intervention or an accredited assessment and rehabilitation program. What program the offender would undertake would depend on prior drink driving offences and BAC level.

The government will continue to investigate successful rehabilitation measures in other jurisdictions to determine if similar programs can be viably implemented throughout the Queensland community. The roles of government and other agencies in these programs will be carefully considered to ensure that an individual's responsibility to address their own drink driving behaviour is not diminished.

What are we not doing?

Some of the initiatives included in the *Drink driving in Queensland discussion paper* are not being progressed at this point. These initiatives either received little support from the community or are not being progressed as they may place an increased burden on low risk drink drivers without having a significant road safety benefit.

These initiatives include:

- lowering the general alcohol limit below 0.05
- abolishing work licences
- requiring work licence holders to install an alcohol ignition interlock
- removing the 48 hour grace period for open licence holders to produce their driver licence when directed.

The Queensland Government is committed to reducing the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities caused by drink drivers on Queensland roads and will continue to work on the best measures to achieve this.